



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

VOLUME XV
NUMBER 3

MARCH, 1907

WHOLE
NUMBER 143

PROBLEMS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FRANCE

VICTOR H. FRIEDEL
Paris

I

The present organization of secondary instruction in France is the outcome of a profound inquiry conducted by a parliamentary commission under the chairmanship of M. A. Ribot, deputy, and of the deliberations of the High Council of Public Instruction on the results of that inquiry and on the proposals of the then minister of public instruction, M. G. Leygues. The large mass of evidence gathered by the parliamentary commission since 1898, when the inquiry began, comprises several substantial volumes.¹ It was the broadest consultation ever put before our country in a matter of public instruction. The commission called to its bar all classes of persons, laymen as well as specialists, and all sorts of bodies, private and public.

In January, 1902, the minister, after having been heard repeatedly by the commissioners, submitted to the High Council a series of proposals on which he and the commission had definitely agreed. The Chamber of Deputies voted on those proposals on February 14, and on May 31 appeared the fundamental decree of the present organization signed by the president of the republic. By an *arrêté* of the same date, a circular of July 19,

¹ Chambre des Députés, Session de 1899, *Enquête sur l'enseignement secondaire*; 6 vols. in 4to (scarce); Paris: March 28, and November 16, 1899 (Nos. 866 et 1196, *Documents parlementaires*).

and a series of subsequent decisions, the minister specified the details of the new scheme and gave the instructions for putting it in practice.

It needs hardly to be said that no commission, however exhaustive its inquiry and however competent its members, even in conjunction with a well-inspired and daring minister, who is himself seconded by an experienced council, could elaborate a scheme so perfect as to bring to a definite solution every one of the problems which called for reform. In matters of pedagogical organization, as in many others of similar nature, there is hardly anything absolute and definite; the leading principles are in these matters farther-reaching and often more valuable than the momentary solutions. If school legislation consists in the application of leading principles as laid down by the educational theorists (who too often dwell on the lofty heights of philosophical speculations, or who work in their laboratories, as it were) to the actual conditions of social, economical, and political evolution; if it consists in adapting school affairs to the present, in harmony with the genius of the race, in order to prepare for the future—in taking such measures as will enable a country to meet all demands involved in its own progress and for a fair competition with other nations—school politics have to be as wisely conducted as state politics. Schools stand nowadays in the very center of life, physical and intellectual, social and moral, private and political, and share with life all the problems which every day shapes into new forms. It is with these views, and with the sincerest intention to create a living and vital organism both of national life and of general civilization, that the Third Republic has undertaken to reorganize its secondary education. How far this noble aim has been approached, we may see by a comparative study of the main features of the reform, and by a review of the problems which it has tried to solve or suggested.

II

Some of these problems are of a general nature and affect or have affected almost all European countries. Secondary education on this side of the Atlantic has a long and glorious history behind it. From this long past it had carried into modern times

many peculiarities which, after having made its force and its glory, appeared to be serious obstacles to further evolution. In new countries, like America, I imagine that an opposition like that of the "classics" and the "moderns" would hardly be fully understood. Yet it was out of that struggle that all the problems of secondary education arose which called for solution during the second half of the bygone century and which, to a certain extent, are still unsolved.

The exclusive *classico-humanistic* character which marked this division as "secondary" (or "higher," in opposition to "primary," "elementary," or "lower") has been gradually stripped off everywhere. The study of Greek first, then that of Latin, has been made optional, reduced, or totally dropped; the study of other so-called "modern" subjects, chiefly scientific, has been strengthened or made predominant; new subjects have been admitted into the programmes. The unique classical type was dissolved into two, sometimes three or more, types.

Parallel with the *Gymnasium* or "Latin school" (also *Gelehrtenenschule*), the German system and its imitators developed a *Realgymnasium* (with Latin, but no Greek), and a *Real- or Ober-realschule* (without any ancient language at all). In France the parallelism had been more strongly accentuated and made an absolute dualism after the creation in 1865, along with the *enseignement secondaire classique*,² of the *enseignement secondaire spéciale*, which became in 1891 the *enseignement secondaire moderne*. Each of these two *enseignements* had its own *bacca-lauréat* to crown the curriculum. This dualism was complicated to the utmost by a series of modifications and complements from 1886 to 1898, when the republic was trying to fit old imperial and royal *lycées* and *collèges* for the requirements of modern life and democracy.

In other countries, where it was also felt that philosophical formalism and the traditional classical education no longer answered the needs of modern society, "modern branches" (*cotés*) were grafted on the old system at a certain point of the curriculum by means of "bifurcations." Yet, the bifurcation

² Governed by a law of the 4th Floréal in the year X (April 23, 1802).

system means virtually the dropping of classical language in the introductory stage of the curriculum, which all pupils enjoy in common before they separate into purely or half-classical work, on the one hand, and purely modern studies, on the other. In the last instance it involves the unity of the whole of secondary education. The great variety in the secondary schools of Switzerland is mainly due to the convenient application of the bifurcation system. In Germany it led to the *Reformschulen* (the systems of Frankfort on the Main and Altona); but neither in 1890 nor in 1900 did the "unitarians" succeed in converting the opinion of "schoolmen," although they showed most favorable results, and although they enjoyed the sympathy of the administrative authority. Norway proceeded in a frankly radical fashion by abolishing ancient language-teaching altogether. On the top of a common, purely modern middle school, which is common to all pupils, the higher secondary grade is built up with a linguistic-historical and a scientific division. Latin—never Greek—may be taught as a "deviation from the law and by special permission of the Storthing and the King."

Such were the general conditions in Europe when France in 1898, and Prussia in 1900, undertook to reorganize their secondary education. One point was clear everywhere: secondary education has to answer the requirements of modern life. Another point was easily carried, at least officially: the equal value of a modern or "real" secondary education with a "classical" secondary education. This brought about the fall of the last fortress of the classics—the privilege of preparing for university studies.

Prussia was ready first. In November, 1900, the king of Prussia, the emperor William II, when at Kiel on board a man-of-war, launched the well-known rescript in the beginning of which he declared "classical" and "real" education of "equal value for the culture of mind." Already in 1890, when opening the Berlin conference on secondary education, he had uttered very energetically his belief that "real" studies fit a man for life better than the philological training he had himself had when at school. The programmes of 1862 strengthened the *Realschulen*, but did not much weaken the partisans of the classical education;

the latter were not deprived then of the precious palladium of preparing for the universities. Since 1900—the new programmes came out in 1901, and nearly all the federated states have followed Prussia—university studies (except theology) are thrown open equally to “gymnasial” and “real” graduates, without any, or with very small, restrictions.

But this capital concession made no great change in the system of secondary education as a whole. The new programmes are established according to the emperor's indications. While expressing his hope of seeing the antagonism between the “classics” and the “moderns” come to an end, by giving them equal rights, the monarch allowed each side to accentuate the respective character of its teaching. Thus Germany is steering toward the dualism of secondary education: the “classical or humanistic *Gymnasium*,” and the modern *Oberrealschule* (or, in the shorter six-year form, the *Realschule*), with a curriculum of nine years. Neither the *Realgymnasium*, which continues as an intermediate type, nor a partial combination of the programmes of both, is a sufficient link between the two independent and fully organized school types which represent German secondary education. The “reform” type, which seeks to keep the unity at least in the first three years of the curriculum, was encouraged in 1900 “as deserving of experiment on a broader basis.” Philological and official Germany has saved once more the “humanistic” secondary school. It remains to be seen whether industrial and commercial Germany will allow it a long existence or not.

In 1902 France also recognized the equal value of classical and modern instruction. But the same cause had with us effects quite opposite to those which we have noted in the neighboring country: France has given up definitely the dualism in secondary education, after having tried it for nearly half a century. On account of Graeco-Roman civilization, she could not repudiate classical instruction; for political and economical reasons she felt it her duty not to subordinate modern studies to it.

The French reform of 1902 unifies classical and modern secondary education in the following way: The course of secondary instruction lasts *seven* years, and is divided into a

first cycle of four, and *second cycle* of three years. At the end of the whole course a single diploma is granted, the *baccalauréat*; whatever the subjects may be which a candidate has pursued and which are mentioned in the diploma, the *baccalauréat* confers equal rights and privileges with regard to his further studies, etc., without distinctions or restrictions. This sanction is the chief official safeguard of unity in secondary education. There is another, inherent in the mode of instruction: The *first cycle* (four years) allows a choice between *two sections*: Section A with Latin (compulsory for the four years from the first class upward: VI-V-IV-III) and Greek (*optional*, beginning in Class IV); Section B without Latin or Greek in the four classes. In either section the studies are arranged so as to constitute a finished course of instruction in itself; it may be called *secondary studies of the first degree*, and is acknowledged by a certificate bearing that denomination and given to any pupil, without special examination, on the marks gained during the four years.

Moreover, for some subjects, the programme is the same in both sections, and the same number of hours is provided in the corresponding classes in A and B. This permits common instruction by the same teacher of the largest number of pupils in both sections, and safeguards *unity of instruction*.

The *first cycle* produces three categories of scholars: (1) classics (Greek-Latinists); (2) half-classics (Latinists); (3) moderns, who may proceed farther toward the *baccalauréat*. The "classics" and the "moderns" continue in their categories. Among the "half-classics" a certain number may give up the study of Latin, and devote themselves to modern subjects, giving the preference either to modern languages or to sciences.

To meet those demands, the *second cycle* comprises *four groups*: A, Latin and Greek; B, Latin and a more developed study of modern languages; C, Latin and a more developed study of the sciences; D, modern languages and sciences. Here too the programmes and time-tables of the (three) classes are arranged with the view of combining for common instruction in some subjects the pupils of two or more of the different sections. During

the whole course of secondary education, the pupils, whatever their principal courses may be, never lose touch with each other; the single final diploma, although it mentions the specialties of graduation, seals this unity.

It may be useful to examine at once some of the aspects of this new organization, to see how it meets the chief problems called forth by the character of secondary education.

While the German emperor expressed his hope that, by proclaiming the equal intrinsic value of classical and modern secondary education, he might see the antagonism disappear between the partisans of the two sides, he has nothing to say against the schools of each sort accentuating their own proper character. He shows the way toward dualism. In France, for somewhat different reasons, the difference of opinion as to the value of these "cultures" was at one time quite as profound as in Germany. The dualism of two distinct secondary schools and two *baccalauréats*, as it had existed since 1865, was the backbone of this antagonism. By a compromise between the two systems, we took a shorter and, I think, a better way toward union than we should have done by strengthening each and waiting until one of the systems became strong enough to kill the other altogether. The action of Norway, which had neither the philological glory of the Germans nor the Graeco-Latin civilization of France to dwell on, is not open to every country.

This was the first of the general problems of secondary education which had to be settled—antagonism of classical and modern culture; dualism or unity. Whether Germany or France has done the right thing, experience will show.

A direct consequence of this first problem was the question: Why has secondary education been on the whole sterile? We have answered: Because it was too rigid and too uniform. Instead of being a school for general culture, more extensive and more scientific than could be afforded in primary schools, it prepared for the university; it was the professional school for the liberal professions. Those boys who had neither the desire, the money, nor the intellectual strength to run through the full course could not enjoy secondary instruction, and either lost their own

time and that of the others, or had for various causes to break off their studies before completing the course. Hence the necessity of rendering the system manifold, supple, articulated. The present French system is characterized by variety within unity. Whether a boy is gifted or not in mathematics or in ancient languages, he finds what he is able to study, or likes most. When he has entered a section and feels that it does not suit him, an easy passage into a more convenient one is open to him at any time. It is hoped that the variety will afford also a better training of the boy's capacities.

The first cycle represents, as said, a course of secondary studies *complete in itself*. This distinguishes our system from the German *Reformschule* (*gemeinsamer Unterbau* without Latin in the three lower classes), and recalls the Norwegian *Middel-skole*, where, however, there are no sections similar to our A, B, C.

When a pupil, voluntarily or compelled by circumstances, leaves the secondary school after four years "secondary education of the first degree," a certificate, to which no prerogatives are attached, testifies to his education at school. The Berlin conference of 1890 had established a similar *Abschlusszeugniss* after the sixth year of the nine-year curriculum, chiefly in order to induce a part of the scholars not to proceed to the universities. But, as it meant a break-off more than a conclusion, and as the rush to the universities did not cease, the emperor abolished it in 1900.

In France a boy reaches the end of the first "cycle" when he is not too old to enter a business career or an apprenticeship. As he does not obtain the privilege of having only one year of military service which the German boy enjoys when he stops after the sixth year of the curriculum, or any other privilege, and as he knows that his studies have come to a certain conclusion, he has not in the same degree as a German *Sekundaner* the feeling that he ought to go on and seek for the *baccalauréat*, after which it is quite natural also to enter the university. But, should he feel inclined to push his instruction farther, otherwise than by entering any section of the ordinary second cycle, there are special two-year courses arranged for him, with modern languages

and applied sciences as chief subjects. These courses may be arranged wherever necessary, and the teaching there may give prominence to such special features as the needs of the region, commercial or industrial, may require. It is worth mention—to emphasize the flexibility of the new programmes—that, as a general rule, our secondary schools are independent enough to develop certain subjects which are especially sought for in the town or region where they are situated. But of that later.

The division into two cycles is not, as it appeared to be in Germany, a harmful break of the whole curriculum, but an articulation of the system, conceived in order to answer better the requirements of our society. It was from a new conception that our school legislators definitely adopted the following principle: Public instruction, like all social institutions, must be so organized as to allow by a simple and easy play of its parts any adaptation, not only to the existing, but also to the possible conditions of life—conditions of which one can foresee the possibilities, if not the exact forms. We shall have to speak in a later paragraph on the seven-year curriculum, instead of eight and nine years, as in Germany and elsewhere.

This principle leads us to a third problem of a general character: the actual position of secondary education within the whole domain of public instruction, and especially with regard to primary education.

Secondary education has kept itself for a long time in a noble and dignified isolation. It is still considered as the school of the bourgeois, of the well-to-do classes; it is very expensive, while primary education is free. Although we do not in France call primary schools *Volkschulen*—a term which originally signified “schools for lower or poorer classes”—our democratic feelings do resent a difference of rank between the two systems. The primary teachers, educated in the primary schools and in the training colleges of normal schools, are a body quite separate from the “professors” of the secondary schools, educated in the secondary schools and in the universities, into which, by the way, many pass by promotion or competition or adoption. There is no intercourse between the two classes of officials of the same

profession, either social or professional, except that secondary teachers often are called to train or to inspect their "minor" colleagues. Efforts have been made in France and elsewhere to bring them nearer to each other. A few years ago "mixed" congresses were organized for secondary and primary teachers, but the union has not been very much encouraged. The question of training primary teachers in secondary schools and in the universities³—a problem which is eagerly discussed in Germany, and which seems happily solved in some Swiss cantons—aroused in France a storm of protest from the primary teachers themselves. It was officially raised two years ago in the Chamber of Deputies by the *rapporteur* on the budget of public instruction. The special as well as the daily press agitated it pro and contra. Putting it on political grounds, the primary teachers saw in the project an attempt to drown the hotbeds of true republicanism and democracy—which the normal schools in France really have been and still are—in the "bourgeois" spirit of the secondary schools. This fear is, at any rate, exaggerated. The democratic feeling of our primary "corps" is strong enough to resist, if not to overcome, the "bourgeois" spirit. Moreover, a freer, more liberal, and above all more scientific training of the primary teachers, which they will find better in the universities than in their "lay convents," seems to be urgently required by the continuous progress of primary education itself. However, to suppress the training colleges in each of the French departments, to make provision for the instruction of primary teachers, men and women, in the secondary schools, and to organize within the universities courses for their scientific and professional—chiefly pedagogical—training, means a great reorganization, and there is no chance of seeing it carried within the near future.⁴

Yet the present ministry seems to grant a smaller, though not less important, reorganization. The secondary instruction, says

³ See *Revue pédagogique*, July and August, 1905, March, 1906; *Manuel général de l'enseignement primaire*, 1904 and 1905. A collection of other documents on the question is in preparation.

⁴ As in Prussia in 1902, France has (in 1904) revised the programmes of the training colleges.

the fundamental decree of 1902, is *co-ordinated* with the primary instruction and continues a regular four-year course of primary studies. Still our secondary schools continue up to the present day, in conformity with the ministerial decree of 1902, to give elementary instruction in the so-called elementary or preparatory classes. The only difference between the elementary classes of a secondary institution and an ordinary primary school is that the programmes of the former include modern languages. There is a contradiction to be removed, if the intention of the decree was to put pupils of the ordinary primary schools and those of the secondary elementary classes on the same footing, with a view to enable them to enter the secondary curriculum. It seems a truism to say that it is more logical to suppress all primary education in the secondary institutions, and leave it to the ordinary primary school. This has been done in most European countries, not excepting Prussia, the country that invented the *Vorschulklassen* at a time when in eastern Prussia there were no proper accommodations for elementary teaching. At present those classes exist in a Prussian secondary school only when self-supporting, as the Prussian ministry does not grant a cent toward their maintenance. In France the primary teachers call very strongly for the removal of what they call a discouraging competition on the part of the secondary schools. Curiously enough, democratic France still professes a strong repugnance to the common elementary school, compulsory for all children without distinction of social rank, while in monarchic Germany the *allgemeine Volkschule* is almost the rule.

The present minister, it is said, intends to establish the "monopoly" of primary education. If that means "primary education by primary teachers," so as to close up the elementary schools hermetically from all contact with other grades, the primary "corps" would win a doubtful independence. For pedagogical as well as for social reasons, there are many teachers, both secondary and primary, who regret the existing difference in the methods of teaching the same subject—for instance, the mother-tongue, or natural history. How will it be possible for a youth, who gets a scholarship, to enter a secondary school at a

given age, when he has got his first education—the most important—in a style totally different from that which he suddenly finds in the secondary school? If you demand an “equal chance,” it is certainly not by building a Chinese wall between the two systems that you will get an open door. Or, do the primary teachers hope to achieve a higher primary system so strong, so varied as to ruin secondary education, as it were, by a sort of trust?

Some school administrators have thought of another way. It is fair, so they say, to give any boy, poor or rich, a chance of getting all the instruction he may wish for. The full “equality in instruction” of all degrees was one of the principles of the Revolution. It was partly realized when primary education was declared “free.” Secondary education, on the contrary, remains the most expensive, more costly even than university instruction. Therefore make it free too, at least for all those who are fit to profit by it. The proposal was brought before the Chamber of Deputies in 1905 by the same *rapporteur* who was asking for the training of primary teachers in the secondary schools and in the universities. It commends itself for various reasons. Social justice, first of all, in a democracy like ours. It would bring about the incorporation of the two systems into one organism of all the shades of education which it is desirable, and yet, in the present state of things, difficult, to realize. Not all countries are in the position of Denmark or Norway, for instance, where secondary education is organically built up—not co-ordinated only—on primary. Yet, free secondary education means a heavy burden on public funds. Even supposing that on many points an easy amalgamation could—and certainly would—take place between the higher primary grade and the “first primary cycle,” leading to simplification and economy, nevertheless the effects of such a measure might outweigh in an unfavorable sense the generosity of the intention. It is feared, not without good cause, that the working class would lose its best men, who by and by would prefer the easy and showy career of an official to energetic labor in agriculture, industry, or commerce.

I think, for my own part, the proposed freeing of secondary

education too generous and dangerous. The ineffectiveness of secondary education, as it was recognized during the inquiry on the "crisis," is partly due to the material conditions of our secondary schools. These schools are self-supporting—we shall have to speak of their legal status later on—and they must live. Many a scholar who is a harmful dunce in his class is allowed to go on because his father pays. There should be no hesitation; those pupils should be dismissed after a year's trial. Another set of pupils, generally of not much profit to the school except for their fee, were those who came to the secondary school because such attendance granted some abatement of military service. Now that every Frenchman has to serve his full period, no matter whether a learned man or not, this class too will disappear from the clientele of the secondary schools. Moreover, the secondary schools of the religious congregations, which attracted the boys of snobbish and mostly reactionary "bourgeois" society, have been done away with. How will the state schools make up for these losses? There, I think, the intelligent youth of primary schools will have to come in—the poorer, but well-gifted boys who deserve to be encouraged by scholarships to attend secondary schools. Instead of making all tuition free, grant a larger number of scholarships. But, in order to insure competent selection, an interrelation between the primary and secondary schools must be established. And again we have to recall to mind, not only the suppleness and variety of the 1902 organization of secondary education which no doubt will facilitate the interrelation, but also the clear statement that secondary education is co-ordinated with primary. To sum up in regard to the relationship of secondary education to primary in France, at present we must confess that the "co-ordination" exists only in the law; that possibilities of closer, even organic, connection are provided for in that very law, but that the minds, both of the public at large and of many specialists and administrators, are not prepared yet to realize it.

With the universities our secondary education continues, of course, the traditional relations; but these relations are becoming more organic. Since our universities have become autonomous

again, a new and vigorous life is noticed in each of them. There has been in later years a remarkable growth of new organizations through which the various seats of higher learning have tried with success to be directly useful to the region where they are situated. Nowhere, except in England, has the American university been studied with more sympathy—even to the point of imitation, although we recognized in America many traces of our own pre-Napoleonic university—than in France. A large number of subjects, chiefly technical and modern, have been admitted. And nothing in secondary education answers better the variety of these new university subjects than its own variety.

It was an ancient institution in France that the secondary *baccalauréat* should be passed before a jury of university professors. The reorganization of 1902 admits to the jury secondary teachers also. We shall see, when speaking on the programmes and on the teaching methods, how closely the university remains connected with the secondary school in preparing the former and determining the latter. The modern universities reach beyond the secondary school, and have established an effective relationship with the primary; not only by a kind of extension lectures in the so-called “popular universities,” but by actually admitting to some university studies, for regular registration and graduation, students with higher primary certificates.

Between the higher republic of arts and science and the lower republic of primary education the isolation of the secondary grades will disappear. The organization of 1902 allows us every hope that the isolation will, though not very rapidly, change into a co-ordination.

From what has been said on the position of secondary education within the domain of public instruction one may gather how necessary it was to consult public opinion on it when reorganization had become a burning question. The attitude before 1902 was a general distrust and disapproval of what was looked upon as an antiquated, energy-killing hotbed of “bourgeois” spirit. The new organization has not yet produced the results on which it would be fair to judge it. Yet there are signs of success, and at least true efforts to secure it. This I hope to show by explain-

ing the legal status of the schools, and their administrative and pedagogical supervision, by examining the new programmes and the methods of teaching which are recommended for each class and subject, and by considering the teaching force. We shall thus see the problems which are not, properly speaking, "national," because they have emerged in other countries too, but which I shall more especially treat with regard to France.